

THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Twenty-Fifth Meeting, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), 24 February - 3 March 1981

ROLE OF ISNAR

Proposed objectives of the discussion

Further to TAC's discussions at the 24th meeting both on the 1981 programme of ISNAR and on the stripe analysis of off-campus activities of IARCs, TAC wished to be appraised of the progress of ISNAR in formulating its policies, priorities, and programme objectives and of the content of its current activities. This document presents information on these questions (section 2) and on the issues (section 3) which are being addressed by the Directing Staff and Governing Bodies of ISNAR, including those raised by TAC at its 20th meeting (see Annex I). The Director General of ISNAR will inform the Committee of the progress made in addressing these issues after the meeting of the Programme Committee of the ISNAR Board in early February 1981. The Committee may then wish to comment and make recommendations on the following points:

- (i) the role of ISNAR and the scope of its activities in relation to its limited size and budget;
- (ii) its mode of operation, and the nature of the services rendered;
- (iii) its priorities and criteria in responding to demands for assistance to national agricultural research in developing countries;
- (iv) its relationships with other institutions within the CGIAR system, and outside, in developing and developed countries;
- (v) the ways and means by which its achievements and impact might be evaluated.

TAC SECRETARIAT

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. BACKGROUND AND PROGRESS	2
2.1 The origins of ISNAR	2
2.2 Review of relevant TAC discussions	3
2.3 The mandate of ISNAR	5
2.4 The launching of ISNAR	8
2.5 Mode of operation	9
2.6 Current activities	10
3. ISSUES	13
3.1 Scope of activities and priorities	13
3.2 Relationships with other institutions	14
3.3 Evaluation	16

ANNEX I - Extract from the Report of the 20th TAC Meeting

THE ROLE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL SERVICE FOR NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (ISNAR)

A discussion paper prepared by the Directing Staff of ISNAR in
consultation with the TAC Secretariat

1. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 24th meeting the TAC briefly discussed the programme and budget proposals for ISNAR for 1981. Given the recent establishment of the Board of ISNAR and the subsequent appointment of its Director General, TAC felt that it was too early for it to address a longer term appraisal of ISNAR activities or the relevance of such an appraisal to its further consideration of the report on the stripe analysis of the off-campus activities (OCAs) of the IARCs. It decided to resume its examination of this subject at its 25th meeting and invited the Director General of ISNAR to join it in this discussion.

2. Accordingly, this discussion paper has been prepared by the Directing Staff of ISNAR in consultation with the TAC Secretariat. After summarising the evolution of the concept of ISNAR and the part played by the TAC in this process, it presents the mandate of ISNAR as laid down in its constitution and describes the steps so far taken to make the service operational. It then suggests certain themes for TAC consideration, in the context of further exploration of the issues arising from the stripe analysis of OCAs as well as from the consideration of the longer term activity of ISNAR as a component of the international agricultural research community and a particular partner in the action to strengthen national developing country capacity to generate, adapt and transmit to farmers improved technology for agricultural and rural development.

3. This paper carries at present no imprimatur from the ISNAR Board of Trustees. It reflects initial thoughts and preliminary discussions and will be considered by the Board's Programme Committee at its February 1981 meeting. This review will give further guidance to the ISNAR Director General for this discussion with the TAC at its subsequent 25th meeting. The outcome of these discussions will be transmitted to the full ISNAR Board at its next meeting in May 1981. The Board has expressed its expectation that this input from the TAC will greatly assist it in refining its policies and defining its future programme. The TAC will have ongoing opportunity to follow the outcome of this process when it considers annually the programme and budgets of ISNAR.

2. BACKGROUND AND PROGRESS

2.1 The origins of ISNAR

4. ISNAR is the youngest member in the family of international research institutions supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). It was formally established on October 31, 1979 when two of the co-sponsors of the CGIAR - UNDP and the World Bank - signed a memorandum of understanding to this effect.

5. ISNAR does not owe its foundation to a single factor but rather to a confluence of several. There has been in recent years a growing awareness of the important contribution that agricultural research can make towards increasing the output of the agricultural sector and overall rural development. It has been recognized that agricultural research is the foundation for progress in rural areas. Investment in successful agricultural research is known to bring among the highest returns of any type of investment in agricultural development. International and bilateral assistance activities towards agricultural research have increased considerably during the last decade. In this context, the role of the International Research Centres of the CGIAR system has been strengthened substantially. Their contributions towards the advancement of agricultural technology for use in the developing countries have received wide recognition and appreciation.

6. At the same time a clear and urgent need has been identified for increased assistance to strengthen the national agricultural research capabilities in developing countries. A strong national research capacity is essential for both the ultimate profit from investments in international research and the tackling of localized problems which are not directly touched by the work of the International Centres. The basic concern is to strengthen the national research systems as a whole in order that such systems can generate and adapt technology suitable to local farming conditions for those commodities which are important to the national development objectives. Only if the scientific capacity and research management capability of the countries concerned are adequately developed so as to enable them to test, adapt and lastly implement the newly developed technologies, can the ultimate aim of the CGIAR system - of helping them to achieve self-sustaining technical capacity and economic growth - be reached.

7. Research needs vary widely among developing countries, depending on their agricultural potential and the stage of development - both technical and institutional - of their research capacities. At the root of the problem in most countries is the need to plan, organize and manage research more effectively. This involves establishing research policies and priorities in accordance with national develop-

ment objectives, resources, potentials and farmers' needs; developing research programmes and projects; organizing and managing the research system to use available resources more effectively; creating effective means for transferring new technology to the extension service and thus ultimately to the farmers; developing training plans to provide the skilled scientists and technicians needed for a balanced system; arranging for the facilities and other support that will enable scientists to work effectively; and establishing links with the International Centres of the CGIAR system and with other national and international research institutions.

8. It is a fact that the build-up of an effective research system is a long-term task which requires long-term support. Development assistance agencies - both international and bilateral - have contributed much to improving national research capabilities, largely through training, financial assistance and the provision of technical expertise for specific research operations. Yet, much remains to be done in these fields. Moreover, increased long-term support is required for the institution-building aspects of these operations.

9. A number of constraints - inherent in the structure and conception of bilateral and multilateral assistance agencies - tend to hamper the commitment of long-term assistance programmes for such institution-building purposes. It soon became clear, therefore, that the existing agencies - bilateral and multilateral - cannot fully meet the pervasive needs of national agricultural research systems, and can benefit fruitfully from complementary efforts.

2.2 Review of relevant TAC discussions

10. An examination of the records of TAC since its first meetings in 1972-73 clearly shows that the Committee was from the beginning facing a dilemma in advising the CGIAR on priorities for international support to agricultural research in developing countries. The Committee recognized that *"strengthening national research establishments and scientific capabilities was essential if full use was to be made of the work the Consultative Group was supporting. Nevertheless the TAC could not itself receive proposals for support to individual national research efforts, this was not its role. Assistance in building up national programmes and for training was, however, a vital task for such multilateral bodies as FAO, UNDP and the World Bank; this was just as important as, and complementary to, the development of international research activities on behalf of developing countries"*. 1/

1/ Report of the 6th TAC meeting. Chairman's summing-up, para 498, p. 74 - July Report 1973.

11. During the subsequent meetings and until the first review of the CGIAR in 1976, TAC continued to pay particular attention to the problem of strengthening national agricultural research. It recognized that, as a first step, it was necessary to assemble more comprehensive and accurate information on the ongoing agricultural research activities in developing countries and thus recommended that the Group should assist FAO in establishing a computerized agricultural research information system (CARIS). It also recommended that the CGIAR support the regional efforts of some international centres and those of WARDA in enhancing national research activities. It received reports from FAO, from the Bellagio Conferences and from IADS on diverse ongoing activities and future plans in these fields and generally gave strong encouragement to all these efforts. TAC however, did not basically change its initial position as stated above.

12. The first review of the CGIAR, while also recognizing the importance of closer links between the centres and the national programmes and the need for stronger national research capabilities in developing countries, gave its general endorsement to the position of TAC in this respect. The Review Committee even went further in specifying which activities of the Centres with the national programmes were considered as appropriate and which were not, therefore suggesting limits to the involvement of IARCs with national programmes.

13. At its 16th meeting TAC was informed that a proposal had been discussed by a group of European donors for the establishment of a new international service for strengthening national agricultural research in developing countries under the auspices of the CGIAR. The Committee considered a more detailed proposal at its 17th meeting in a joint session with the Centre Directors. While recognizing the importance of the subject, TAC noted that many questions had to be addressed further and many institutions were involved already in this field. The Committee therefore recommended to the CGIAR the establishment of a task force composed of representatives of the main interested parties to examine the proposal further. The Committee received progress reports on the work of the task force at its 18th and 19th meetings. The proposal, as further elaborated by the task force, was considered by TAC at its 20th meeting in September 1978. TAC commended the proposal to the CGIAR for favourable consideration - while expressing some reservations and cautions and the need for clarification on a number of points. ^{1/} Several of these points are raised again later in this paper among the issues for TAC's discussion at this present meeting.

^{1/} The list of these points as recorded in the minutes of the 20th meeting, is given in Annex I.

14. TAC was kept informed at subsequent meetings of the progress in the establishment of ISNAR. It did not, however, make further substantive comments on the service but reiterated several of the questions it had raised before as regards the role of the service vis-à-vis the IARCs, other international organizations, its scope, its priorities and ultimate size. Several of these questions took a new dimension when TAC made a survey of the off-campus activities of the IARCs, many of which aim at strengthening national research and transferring technologies. The Committee therefore decided that a further discussion of the role of ISNAR and of its future programme was timely at its 25th meeting.

2.3 The mandate of ISNAR

15. The report of the task force, having been considered by the TAC in September 1978, was discussed by the CGIAR in November of that year. The CGIAR accepted the proposal to establish the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) under its own auspices, broadly along the lines recommended by the task force. In line with established practice, the CGIAR formed a Committee of its members having an interest in establishing ISNAR, to take decisions on the Group's behalf and initiate actions leading towards the actual establishment of the new Service. The Committee appointed the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) as executing agency for the establishment of ISNAR. On October 26, 1979 the ISNAR Committee adopted the Constitution of ISNAR and thus prepared the ground for ISNAR's legal establishment in October 31, 1979.

16. The following is the mandate of ISNAR as set out in this extract from its Constitution:

"Chapter III. Purposes, Principles, Activities

Purposes

4. *The purpose of ISNAR is to help strengthen national agricultural research capabilities in developing countries. This includes assistance in identifying research problems and in formulating research strategies and policies, assistance in building up an adequate institutional infrastructure and other research facilities, as well as in promoting specific national or regional research programs. The ultimate goal is to enable developing countries to plan, organize, manage and execute research more effectively from their own human, natural and financial resources.*

5. ISNAR will serve as a linkage mechanism between the International Agricultural Research Centres of the CGIAR system and national agricultural research institutions.
6. ISNAR will serve as intermediary between interested partners in order to promote bilateral cooperation in the field of agricultural research.

Principles

7. ISNAR's services are available to any developing country. ISNAR will provide assistance to a country only at the country's request.
8. ISNAR will work in close cooperation with all international organizations in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), bilateral agencies, foundations and national and regional organizations concerned with agricultural research. ISNAR will complement, not compete with, such other programs and sources of technical assistance.
9. ISNAR will concentrate its assistance mainly on program, project, policy, organizational and management issues of agricultural research.
10. ISNAR will give emphasis to the generation, introduction and use of adapted technology suitable to resource-poor farmers and local farming conditions.
11. ISNAR will be concerned with commodities and other renewable natural resources important to national development objectives including, but not limited to, the food commodities covered by other components of the CGIAR system.
12. ISNAR is essentially limited to assistance in the organization of research. It shall also maintain an awareness of the linkages among research, training and extension.
13. ISNAR will, for the execution of programs or projects, normally seek the service of existing international or national agencies. Only in exceptional cases may ISNAR assume operational responsibilities. Each such involvement will require prior approval of the ISNAR Board of Trustees, provided that costs are fully covered from non-core funding.

Activities

14. ISNAR will provide or arrange for assistance to developing countries in:

- (a) Identifying needs for planning and carrying out agricultural research;
 - (b) Determining research priorities;
 - (c) Formulating overall research policies and strategies;
 - (d) Elaborating programs of action including specific projects for external financing;
 - (e) Designing necessary organizational and institutional arrangements for carrying out research programs and projects;
 - (f) Identifying the necessary resources for the execution of such activities;
 - (g) Contacting potential external sources for financing research programs and projects;
 - (h) Promoting effective links between research organizations, extension services and the farming community;
 - (i) Determining the basic facilities required to conduct research (laboratories, equipment, experimental stations, adequate staffing, finance, etc.);
 - (j) Establishing and strengthening links to existing information systems in order to speed up exchange of information on research results, ongoing research, and training opportunities at international and national institutions;
 - (k) Organizing appropriate flows of information within a geographic region so that interested countries may arrange to cooperate on specific research efforts;
 - (l) Arranging training programs for research and research support staff;
 - (m) Organizing and supporting symposia and seminars for the interchange and dissemination of ideas and information useful in the development and operation of national research systems;
 - (n) Evaluating the effectiveness and suitability of various forms of research organization and activity.
15. ISNAR will establish an information system insofar as it enables the Service to fulfill its functions and does not duplicate existing information services.
16. ISNAR will keep abreast of policies, practices and capabilities of other agencies active in agricultural research. ISNAR will also keep abreast of important technical developments in agricultural research.

17. *ISNAR will perform such other activities as its Board of Trustees may find necessary in furtherance of its purposes."*

2.4 The launching of ISNAR

17. On the adoption of the Constitution the CGIAR ISNAR Committee also took certain important operational decisions. It decided to invite the Government of the Netherlands to agree to the establishment of ISNAR Headquarters in that country, at the hub of international communications and with equal access and accessibility to all three major developing regions, Africa, Asia and Latin America, and within range of close and effective contact with the scientific resource base of the industrialised countries. The preferred location was The Hague.

18. The Committee also selected ten members for membership of the initial Board of Trustees of ISNAR and then delegated to the Board the responsibility for completing the elected membership. As of March 1, 1980 the ISNAR Board of Trustees is composed as follows:

Dr. Kazi M. Badruddoza	Bangladesh
Mr. Bo M.I. Bengtsson	Sweden
Dr. Gelia T. Castillo	Philippines
Mr. Luis B. Crouch	Dominican Republic
	- Vice Chairman -
Dr. Robert K. Cunningham	United Kingdom
Dr. Jacques Diouf	Senegal
Dr. William K. Gamble	U.S.A.
	- Director General; ex-officio -
Dr. Lowell S. Hardin	U.S.A.
Dr. Jaap J. Hardon	Netherlands
	-Appointed by the host country-
Mr. William A.C. Mathieson	United Kingdom
	- Chairman -
Dr. Ishmael E. Muriithi	Kenya
Dr. Subhi A. Qasem	Jordan
Dr. Vernon W. Ruttan	U.S.A.
Dr. Howard A. Stepler	Canada
Dr. Werner Treitz	Federal Republic of Germany

19. FAO is regularly represented at Board Meetings and the Chairman of the Group of Directors of the IARCs is regularly invited to participate in Board Meetings.

20. On June 2, 1980 an Agreement between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and ISNAR concerning the Headquarters of ISNAR was signed by H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Chairman of the ISNAR Board of Trustees. In accordance with this

agreement ISNAR has established its Headquarters in the Netherlands. Office accommodation has been secured on a rental basis in The Hague. On August 25, 1980 Dr. William K. Gamble took up his functions as ISNAR's first Director General. From this date on ISNAR Headquarters became operational in The Hague. On September 10-11, 1980 the Board held its second meeting in the Board Room of its new Headquarters.

2.5 Mode of operation

21. ISNAR came into being with a guide for its staff size and budget fairly well determined by the Task Force Report and the level of commitment by the CGIAR for a six year period established. The mode of operation is also governed by the Principles set out in paras 7-13 of the Constitution. This in turn influences the staffing pattern of ISNAR.

22. The plan for staffing is to recruit Senior Research Officers with considerable research and research management experience in developing countries. These officers will be appointed on contract for up to the present projected life span of ISNAR. Approximately twelve such officers are projected. Particular subject matter specializations will not be sought but rather competence in research policy, research organization, research management and the interface between research and the delivery system will be sought as the added factor to demonstrate competence in overall research administration. In addition, three or four Senior Research Fellows will be appointed each year. These persons will have similar qualifications to the Senior Research Officers but will come to ISNAR on one year appointments. In order to assure regional knowledge in the staff one Fellow will be appointed each year, each from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Occasionally, Senior Research Fellows will be appointed for one year or less periods for particular tasks such as country desk studies to prepare for field missions. There will also be a specialist in communications and a specialist in conference and seminar organization and management. Finally, consultants in specialized fields will be recruited as required.

23. In its operation, a fundamental principle that will be followed is that ISNAR will only undertake activities in connection with national programmes at the request of the national government or relevant national institution. The activities in which it will take independent initiative are in organizing and conducting workshops, seminars and meetings, in developing its communication programme and in undertaking some specialized studies to determine the "state of the art" on a relevant subject or in developing reference material for the conferences, workshops and meetings.

24. A second principle in operation is that ISNAR will only undertake project implementation in exceptional cases. Here a primary objective will be to seek first to involve the assistance of other executing agencies, but in the last resort to ensure implementation of projects where no other appropriate agency can be identified.

25. In training, ISNAR expects that much of the training required will be specialized post-graduate education. Therefore, ISNAR will expect to play an analytical and advisory role in determining requirements for training for manpower development for national research systems. In its own training programme, attention will be given to short courses on aspects of research management. Considerable attention is to be given to seminars and workshops on the importance of research for agricultural development, and the economic benefits from agricultural research.

26. In reviewing national agricultural research systems and in its other activities, ISNAR will complement its core staff with consultants to provide the specialized expertise required on a short-term basis. ISNAR expects that its core budget will normally cover its missions to national programmes but will seek special project funds for follow-up activities connected with monitoring the implementation of projects. If ISNAR undertakes operational responsibility for any projects then special funding will be sought. Similarly, special funding will be utilized for some meetings, workshops, and special projects.

27. The above is given as an indication of the present plan for ISNAR to carry out its activities.

2.6 Current activities

28. In accordance with its programme and budget, ISNAR has embarked on a number of activities in four major programme areas.

(a) Assistance to developing countries in the evaluation and planning of national research systems

29. In late 1980, ISNAR initiated its operations under this programme area by launching jointly with ICRISAT a field mission to several states of Southern Africa. At the request of the Heads of State of these countries, this mission examined the need for and feasibility of establishing a regional research centre to serve these countries. The mission was carried out in late November and early December and the report to the Heads of State is in preparation at ICRISAT.

30. Three official requests from developing countries have been received so far for ISNAR assistance. ISNAR has been invited to send missions to these countries and to assist them in reviewing and evaluating their existing national research set-up with a view to making recommendations on appropriate measures to strengthen the national research organizations. In response to these requests ISNAR has made arrangements to organize field missions to these three countries.

31. In addition a number of informal requests have been received and indications are that further requests for ISNAR assistance are likely to come forward in the course of 1981. ISNAR will respond within the limits of its human and financial resources.

(b) Special reports

32. ISNAR has undertaken to carry out studies on the factors influencing the effectiveness of agricultural research organizations. In these studies, institutional, organizational and other factors will be analysed and those aspects that have a bearing on research effectiveness will be identified and documented. It is felt that such studies will enhance the state of knowledge presently available on this subject and will sharpen the focus on a number of key problem areas for the future work of ISNAR at the country level. It would also improve the tools available for ISNAR to carry out its mission of advising national research organizations in their efforts of improving the functional effectiveness of their research programmes.

33. As a first step towards such a study on the effectiveness of research organization, ISNAR has initiated a review of existing literature in this field. The results of this study are expected to be available for distribution by the second half of 1981.

34. Regarding the execution of this study, consultations have been held with a number of organizations and individuals who are both active and knowledgeable in this field of competence. Working contacts are being developed with additional institutions in order to make maximum use of knowledge in existence elsewhere and to minimize duplication of effort.

(c) Conferences, workshops, seminars and training

35. In accordance with its programme of work for 1981, ISNAR has undertaken to organize and conduct - in cooperation with other organizations - a number of workshops/seminars. These workshops/seminars will serve as a platform for discussions of policies, priorities and actions needed to promote the strengthening of agricultural research services in the

developing countries. Also, they will provide the ISNAR management with the feed-back required for the further improvement of ISNAR's future programmes of activity and for sharpening the focus of ISNAR programmes on the actual needs of client countries.

36. In mid-March 1981, ISNAR in cooperation with IARCs and SEARCA will organize and conduct a seminar on "National Agricultural Research Programmes and Systems in Asian Countries". This seminar will be held at SEARCA Headquarters at Los Baños, the Philippines, and will bring together national research leaders from some 15 Asian countries. This seminar is being organized in conjunction with a regional consultation of national research leaders with the CGIAR review team, but as a completely separate meeting.

37. Along similar lines, ISNAR is exploring at present the possibility of conducting jointly with IFARD a meeting for the African Region in early March, 1981. Such a meeting would be organized in conjunction with the planned meeting of African research leaders with the CGIAR review team in Nairobi, Kenya in early March.

38. ISNAR participation has been agreed upon for the IFARD sponsored meeting of Latin American research leaders at San José, Costa Rica in mid-March, 1981. Here, too, the idea is to secure an input into ISNAR programming from national research leaders.

39. Provisions have been made to convene, jointly with IADS and IFARD, a meeting of national research leaders. This meeting - conceived to be a follow-up to the discussions in 1977 which led to the establishment of IFARD - will be held in late November 1981 at the Bellagio facilities of the Rockefeller Foundation.

40. With regard to training, ISNAR is aware of the need to put heavy emphasis on training and the development of indigenous manpower for the nations that are to be assisted. ISNAR will give priority attention to this area and will use both its field missions and the respective seminars to identify specific training needs of national programmes and sources of support for such training.

(d) Communications and information

41. An ISNAR Communications and Information Officer will take up his functions on 1 April, 1980. A specific programme of activities will be developed later in the year.

3. ISSUES

3.1 Scope of activities and priorities

42. The scope of activities for ISNAR's attention is set forth under Chapter III, paragraphs 14-17 of its Constitution. These have been noted in a preceding section of this discussion paper. The range of activities in which ISNAR is permitted to engage covers a broad spectrum. ISNAR's Board of Trustees and Directing Staff consider that this mandate is wide enough to authorize any action which is presently foreseen. Most of these activities are country-specific but some are more general and global in nature.

43. The Constitution draws the outline of the framework within which ISNAR is to operate but does not assign priority to any particular function. ISNAR must therefore consider several sets of priorities for the allocation of its human and financial sources. The first relates to the type of request to which it should respond within its permitted range of activities, e.g. should it give priority to a general request for policy and organizational review of a country's research establishment as opposed to a more specific request for assistance in project preparation in a defined sector. The second relates to the origin of the request, e.g. should ISNAR be more ready to respond to an approach from a poor country with a lower level of research capacity than to an approach from a richer developing country well endowed with research institutions but needing more sophisticated diagnosis and treatment.

44. Another set of priorities would relate to choice amongst those activities which ISNAR would itself initiate, e.g. workshops in a developing region, seminars at headquarters, information collation and analysis, exploration of training needs and facilities, liaison with other institutions, contact with the development assistance community and so on. There is also the wider priority issue of the balance between country involvement and centrally initiated and directed activities.

45. No clear tables of priorities in these areas or guidelines for their establishment have yet been adopted by the ISNAR Board of Trustees nor have recommendations been formulated by the Directing Staff.

46. The following issues meanwhile are amongst those which ISNAR is addressing:

- a. Should there be an equal balance of activities for ISNAR between the least developed and the more developed research systems? It is recognized that different kinds of services will be required for the differing levels of development of research systems but should there be any bias towards those countries having well developed research systems? Or, towards the least developed?

- b. Should there be priority for projects that involve strengthening the total agricultural research system as compared to projects on sub-sectors of the system or on project formulation?
- c. Should ISNAR give priority either to assisting national programmes to obtain support for implementation of research projects that have been identified or should it give higher priority to project identification or formulation or a balance between the two?
- d. Should priority be given to assisting national programmes to establish linkages with IARCs? Should ISNAR take action on this at the request of IARCs and donors or only at the initiative of national governments?
- e. What priority should be given to training? Should this only be viewed in the context of reviews of national agricultural research systems and sub-sectors of the systems or should there be an independent effort by ISNAR on training? Should ISNAR limit itself to an advisory role on training or should it take an active part in training?
- f. In regard to information systems, should ISNAR give priority to strengthening links to existing information systems or to the development of its own information base on research organization, management and evaluation, or on assisting national programmes to strengthen and make more effective their agricultural communication programme in relation to research?
- g. Should priority be given to requests from national programmes over requests from donor countries to undertake projects?
- h. What should be the priority for ISNAR to build up its capacity as a source of information on new knowledge and experience in research policy, organization, management, evaluation and other facets of the research systems in order to keep itself and others abreast of developments in these fields?
- i. What priority should be given in ISNAR projects to assuring effective links between research organization, extension and the farmers?
- j. What should be the criteria for determining when ISNAR should take on operational responsibility in projects?

3.2 Relationships with other institutions

47. ISNAR is in the process of examining its future working relationships with other institutions. Most of ISNAR's functions will call for liaison, cooperation and information exchange with some other institutions, making maximum use of their resources (financial and/or technical) and seeking maximum complementarity of efforts. The range and the diversity

of these institutions are however considerable and one of the tasks of ISNAR will be to maintain a constant awareness of the activities and capabilities of these institutions.

48. The first category of institutions with which ISNAR will seek to develop relationship is, of course, that of the national agricultural research institutions (NARIs) in the developing countries. When being called to assist NARIs in planning and management, however, ISNAR may be requested to deal with a complex pattern of national institutions which may vary from country to country. These may include different ministries, the national institutions in charge of relationships with various technical assistance agencies and other governmental or para-governmental institutions. Changes in the national structures will usually call for policy decisions and sometimes legislative action. The role of ISNAR in this context will therefore be delicate and it will be essential that from the beginning of a mission by ISNAR there is a clear understanding on which national institution is requesting ISNAR services, what are its powers and its tasks as set by the local government.

49. Another category of institutions with which ISNAR is already establishing cooperation are those regional and international institutions of the developing regions which are especially concerned with the field of activity of ISNAR i.e. national agricultural research. These include on a worldwide basis IFARD and on a regional basis institutions such as IICA, CATIE, SEARCA, etc. As indicated in Section 2.6 of this document, these institutions can serve as some kind of forum for the exchange of information on the evolving needs, priorities and policies of developing countries in this field.

50. The relationship of ISNAR with the above institutions may not only help the service in a better understanding of the needs of developing countries but also provide opportunities for lateral transfer of relevant experience between developing countries, facilitating their cooperation and making better use of their technical expertise.

51. A third category includes the international institutions such as the IARCs, the Co-sponsors and other international institutions members of the CGIAR. Each of these institutions operates under the guidance of an international governing body and within the framework of its approved mandate and programme and budget. The relationships of ISNAR with these institutions will have to be determined on a case-by-case basis and will take time to develop.

52. A fourth category is that of the national institutions of developed countries, in particular their bilateral assistance agencies but also other government and private institutions involved in research, training, information exchange, financial and technical assistance.

ISNAR will develop ad hoc flexible arrangements with these national institutions, as and when required.

53. The relationship of ISNAR with the above bilateral and multi-lateral and other national or international institutions including the IARCs is likely to be far more complex as it may serve multiple purposes. Most of these institutions can act vis-à-vis ISNAR in several ways:

- (i) as a source of technical information
- (ii) as a source of information on ongoing activities in international and national research in developing countries
- (iii) as a source of expertise, consultants, etc.
- (iv) as a source of financial assistance to developing countries for projects which ISNAR may help to formulate.

It should be noted that many of these institutions will not look at themselves as potential "sources" of information, expertise, funds etc. only, but may also consider ISNAR as a similar source from which they may expect a range of services.

54. It is clear from the above, that the web of inter-institutional relationships in which ISNAR will be involved is intricate. It may be expected from ISNAR that it will play a role in facilitating the co-ordination of some activities without, however, acting itself as a co-ordinator. Some aspects of these inter-institutional relationships are being given particular attention by ISNAR since these were the subject of considerable discussions by the task force and TAC. The participation of a representative of FAO and the Chairman of the Group of Centre Directors in the deliberations of the Board of ISNAR is particularly helpful in this respect.

55. The Director General of ISNAR will report to TAC on the further progress made in this field.

3.3 Evaluation

56. In commending the task force report to the CGIAR, TAC suggested that suitable criteria for monitoring and periodic assessment of the effectiveness of the efforts of the Service be established. ISNAR accepts this proposition in principle, not least because the Constitution provides that the first six years of ISNAR's existence (five years following a start-up year (1980)) are to be considered as an initial period to gain experience and to test the effectiveness of the Service. Before the expiry of the initial period, the performance of ISNAR, its mandate, its permanent location and the provisions of its Constitution are to be reviewed and evaluated by the CGIAR. If a decision were

envisaged to terminate ISNAR activities at the end of 1985, such a decision would have to be taken by the CGIAR in late 1984, requiring a quinquennial review for the more radical purposes stated in the Constitution in the course of that year. It is against this time scale that regular in-house monitoring procedures and internal performance audit should be organized to produce available data sequences and elements for performance judgements as material for the more basic review.

57. This approach requires early determination of the criteria to be applied in performance assessment. The ultimate test of ISNAR action will be increased agricultural production in line with national objectives and enhanced prosperity in farming communities in the countries involved in ISNAR programmes. It is improbable that much evidence of this sort will become apparent in five years. What are the medium-term criteria which could be applied to ISNAR operations? Where national systems have been re-organized and resources re-deployed on ISNAR generated advice, are they operating smoothly with good linkage to production? Has ISNAR effectively distilled its experience from country involvement into published guidelines of more general application? By what proportion has the manpower base in concerned national programmes been expanded and raised in professional competence? In how many countries has agricultural research gained practical recognition as an important factor in national development? How much investment of development assistance, in money terms, in agricultural research has been stimulated by ISNAR intervention? What is the opinion of Directors-General of other IARCs of the value of ISNAR's contribution to the adoption of their product? Has the tropical agricultural research community gained in influence, coherence and self-reliance with ISNAR assistance? These are perhaps some of the questions which should be asked, and material collected to answer them, as experience evolves.

58. There are few of these questions susceptible of answer in quantitative terms; they mainly invite subjective response. Even if good things happen, the credit may not be confidently attributed to ISNAR. Conversely, failure may not be justly attributable to ISNAR deficiency: ISNAR must find some objective yard-sticks to measure its own effectiveness as it moves along, not least because it must have the courage to cut losses when involvement seems unproductive or modify programmes to adjust to emerging realities. The validity of the criteria adopted in selecting projects must be continuously tested and refined from experience. Any guidance available on the methodology of approaching these tasks would be welcome.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE 20th TAC MEETING

"69. TAC discussed the report of the Task Force at considerable length during this meeting. It endorsed the report and commended it to the CGIAR for favourable consideration. It reiterated its position on the great importance of strengthening national agricultural research systems. It took note of substantial efforts which are underway by several organizations but recognized the need for acceleration and for additional effort under the CG auspices. It expressed some reservations and cautions, and the need for clarification on a number of points. The degree of caution or doubt differed among different members of TAC. An overwhelming majority of TAC favoured proceeding and recommending the Task Force report and recommendations for favourable consideration by the Consultative Group.

70. In making this recommendation, TAC made the following observations:

- (i) A suggestion was included in the report that perhaps the first efforts might be directed toward some of the least-developed research systems. TAC felt that the early effort should not be so limited but that it would be advantageous if assistance might be provided to institutions at varying stages of development. These would no doubt have different kinds of needs or different mixes of requirements, and a broader range of experience with the different institutions at different stages of development would be advantageous.
- (ii) TAC suggested that suitable criteria for monitoring and periodic assessment of the effectiveness of efforts for this service be established.
- (iii) TAC felt that the organization, when created, should be quite alert to the sensitivity of other organizations. This was especially true of a Co-Sponsor. It was also felt that every effort should be made to strive for cooperation and complementarity and to avoid competition and duplication of effort.
- (iv) Attention was called to the need for putting heavy emphasis on training and indigenous manpower development for the nations which are being assisted.
- (v) TAC suggested that the expatriate personnel used should be kept to a minimum, consistent with the needs and desires of the recipients.

- (vi) A reservation was expressed that the organization would be at some risk of undue donor influence and direction in imposing donor views on the recipients, and the organization should be on guard against this.
- (vii) Some members called attention to the risk of discrimination among recipient countries and possible lobbying for resources.
- (viii) The scope of the activities was discussed at some length. Those which are admitted under the proposal are quite broad. TAC felt that the organization should be alert to keep its programme and objectives as sharply focused as possible and should avoid over-extension beyond the scope of its major objectives and in line with the limited area of need in this field in the recipient countries. *continue*
- (ix) Doubt was expressed that the size of the staff and budget projected would be adequate for the programme and for the range of tasks which are envisaged.
- (x) Several members expressed concern that, over time, the organization may have difficulty in maintaining the excellence and quality of the staff and suggested that it would need to build in methods for ensuring the professional renewal and continued excellence of the staff that would be implementing the programme.
- (xi) Some reservation was expressed that there might be a temptation to get too deeply involved in national policy formulation, and this could encounter political sensitivities and should be avoided.
- (xii) Some expressed reservations about the organization undertaking the implementation of the programmes it helps to plan and thereby perhaps compromising its internal integrity. This point of view was by no means universal; others felt that this could be a positive rather than a negative factor. There was no unanimity on this point but some members wished to express this caution.
- (xiii) There was a general reluctance to recommend creation of a new international organization, with one or two exceptions in the Committee, it was agreed that the need and the opportunity here did justify an exception in this case.

71. As indicated in para. 69 above, and having made these observations, the TAC confirmed its endorsement of the conclusions and recommendations of the report and commended it to the CGIAR for favourable consideration."